Bassett Furniture Industries

Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Bassett Furniture Industries Focuses on Lean Improvements

Client Profile:
Bassett Furniture Industries, Inc. has been a leader in the furniture industry for more than 90 years. Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Bassett Furniture is a global corporation with facilities in 16 states and more than 33 countries. The Bassett, Virginia facility currently employs over 250 workers. The company manufacturers high-quality wood and upholstered case goods, bedroom furniture, and dining room furniture. For many years, Bassett has been generating millions of dollars in retail sales worldwide.

Situation:
In recent years, Bassett Furniture Industries (BFI) has seen increased competition from foreign furniture manufacturers, which are now able to supply like-styled products of similar quality at much lower prices. The company decided to renew its focus by dedicating efforts to its core business: wood and upholstered furniture under the "Bassett" brand name. At the same time, BFI has been pushing to find ways to improve its manufacturing processes via lean manufacturing techniques. By the time Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (VPMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, met with company executives, BFI had already begun to implement a lean transformation within the cabinet assembly area. However, BFI needed to determine standard times for work in order to measure the results of the transformation. Establishment of the initial baseline process outputs would allow BFI to benchmark future lean improvements facilitated by VPMEP.

Solution:
VPMEP led a time study project to establish time standards to be used in scheduling the 113 cabinet and bed products at the Bassett, Virginia facility. VPMEP spent several weeks at the facility videotaping the processes and taking stopwatch observations, calculations, and analyses. After concluding the observation phase, VPMEP developed standard times for each product. Based on these times, VPMEP suggested that BFI undertake a set-up reduction and lean improvements project in the molder operations area to attack bottlenecks and improve product flow at the facility.

Results:
* Established measurements to compare to future lean improvements in reliable deliveries.
* Doubled SKUs with a wider variety of product line, customer order-to-shipment cycle times and shareholder value.
* Improved set-up time and balanced work.
* Increased capacity of the cabinet assembly area by at least 10 percent.
* Improved flexibility by allowing quicker changeovers between products.

Testimonial:

"The information provided by Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership proved invaluable in setting time standards on the flow of product through the assembly process. This gave the company capabilities to set-up new product with the baseline set by existing SKUs. In addition, it allowed us to identify bottlenecks for SKUs and make necessary changes faster than with previous techniques. With limited engineering support, VPMEP completed the studies confidently and in a timely manner."

Brian Cecil, Industrial Engineer